

#E1-622
R4

February 22, 2004

3980 FM 2676
Hondo, Texas 78861

Surface Transportation Board
Case Control Unit
1925 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

received
2/23/04

Attention: Rini Ghosh

Re: Finance Docket No. 34284

Dear Ms. Ghosh

In response to the Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement, I am submitting the following to be considered in the formal scoping process.

I believe Vulcan's proposed quarry and the proposed SGR rail line, regardless of where the railroad is constructed, are connected actions, and should be studied in the same Environmental Impact Statement. The study should include direct impacts and alternatives to other projects, including no quarry and no rail line at all.

I, Judy Dittmar, as a concerned landowner and a Director of Medina County Environmental Action Association, would like to voice my fears of the Vulcan Materials proposed quarry and rail construction.

This proposed quarry and rail aims to destroy our peaceful community as it is now through air and water pollution and creating a deadly traffic situation. Many generations have been enjoying a peaceful rural life, and, new people have come to escape just such environmental destruction as we are now facing.

My major concern is the possible contamination of the Edwards Aquifer. This is everyone's source of water including the ninth largest city in Texas, San Antonio. The proposed quarry sight is on the Aquifer. It's fuel storage, as indicated, is on the Aquifer, and the possible contamination from the rail cars is much too close to the Edwards Aquifer. There are caves, sink holes, fault line veins, etc. which can carry this contamination right into our water source.

I speak of my own farm where land use is concerned. We have a small farm. Our son, wife, and new baby live on the farm in the approximately 70 year old home (I feel this is one of the two homes they mentioned being in path area of their proposed rail). We have tried to set up somewhat of a grass and grazing pattern, and, even installed a pipeline for better distribution of grazing, as an attempt to prevent soil erosion and provide cleaner air. Our farm is very near the proposed quarry site and the beginning of the proposed rail which will cut right through the best part of the farm and within a few hundred feet of the house, waterwell, and pipeline. Cutting the farm as it does will mean starting over with our erosion control. A few hundred feet on the other side of the house is CR 353, a dusty gravel road which will carry the traffic, including over a hundred trucks a day to and from the proposed quarry loading area, headquarters, and designated delivery points. This will create a dangerous air pollution problem. There will be so much dust this family will not be able to breathe. The same will be the case with the dust from the rail cars from quarry to delivery point, every city, town, and person will suffer.

There is mass travel on the two larger roadways to be crossed by the proposed surface rail (State Highway 2676 and County Road 4516). This travel will be detained by all concerned—fire trucks, ambulances, emergency law officers, school buses, and many, many people going to work to and from San Antonio and other area points. Contrary to what newspaper articles (from people who do not live here) have stated, these roads are heavily traveled. It is my understanding that county Road 4516 has been studied for State Highway status because of its traffic load. We can only see to it that all legal requirements will be met as far as safety is concerned.

Flooding in the whole area of the rail is my next concern and could be devastating to the whole Quihi area. My home is in Quihi near the Elm and Quihi Creeks. The farm, approximately 4 miles north on County Road 353, is near the Elm creek. In recent years, the normal flood waters of these two creeks trapped us in our home for the first time in the 40 years we live here. A few more inches of water (if regular flow of creeks is changed or rail causes flow problem) could destroy our home among others, including some 30 to 35 homes with historical value, the church complex, several cemeteries, and a couple of businesses within Quihi.

Wildlife must be protected. This is a reason for living in a rural area, and, hunting has also become, in some cases, a necessary form of income.


Who am I to stop progress-- but this is disaster-a danger threat to the whole area. Why put a railroad through the creeks and the flood plain, threatening a whole seven mile area and small town, when you could move just a little further in either direction or to a completely different location, and cause much less damage and destruction.

I do hope that our concerns, along with your newly required survey, will save us from this physical and environmental destruction. Following are a few additional points we would like to see covered by the new EIS:

Vulcan should show us how their seemingly threatened 'all truck transport, if rail is not built, would be financially feasible to them.

How Vulcan could ever, or can now continue to, plan this project when the Edwards Aquifer Protection Plan states that 'mining will be wholly prohibited on the Edwards Aquifer?

Sincerely,


Melvin and Judy Dittmar, Landowners
Judy Dittmar, Director, MCEAA